



City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of Summons: 19th January 2024

SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council: Councillors E Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, N Brown, A Doig, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, R Hanson, G Holland, C Lattin, G Nair, R Ormerod, E Scott, S Walker and H Weston.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Meeting of the Council** to be held in the **Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF on Thursday 25th January 2024 at 7:00pm** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown.

Members of the public and press are also cordially invited to attend. Members of the public may address Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meetings for up to three minutes, with the agreement of the Chair of the meeting, provided that the statement is related to an item on the agenda. The speaker should approach the Clerk before the meeting commences to request to speak during the meeting.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Civility and Respect and Human Rights plus Social, Economic and Environmental matters.

Yours faithfully,

A. Shanley

Mr Adam Shanley

Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council

AGENDA

- 1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**
- 3. PRESENTATION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S QUALITY AWARD BY COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**
- 4. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19TH DECEMBER 2023**
- 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**
 - **Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 8th December 2023**
Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:
<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/planning-committee/>
 - **Environment Committee minutes from meetings held on 14th November 2023**
Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:
<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/environment-committee/>
 - **Business Committee minutes from meetings held on 21st November 2023**
Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:
<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/business-committee/>
 - **Finance Committee minutes from meetings held on 12th June 2023**
Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:
<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/finance-committee/>
- 7. CHAIR'S UPDATE**
The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 19th December 2023
- 8. REPORT ON THE UPGRADING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S WEBSITE**
- 9. TO REVIEW THE PARISH COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES**
- 10. PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGY 2024/25**
- 11. PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25**

- 12. PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT REQUEST FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25**
- 13. REPORT ON PARISH COUNCIL INTERNAL CONTROLS**

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Tuesday 19th December 2023 at 5:00pm in the Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF.

Present: Councillors A Doig (in the Chair), E Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, N Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, G Holland, E Scott and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and Mr John Ashby (member of the public).

1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING

Apologies were received from Councillors R Hanson, C Lattin, R Ormerod and H Weston.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr John Ashby advised that he was attending the meeting to hear the discussions on item 6 of the Agenda.

5. UPDATE ON THE BY-ELECTION FOR THE DURHAM SOUTH PARISH WARD

Members **noted** that a request had now been formally received by ten electors within the Durham South parish ward for a by-election, following the resignation of Councillor Govind Nair. Members also **noted** that two candidates had now been nominated and therefore the by-election is to be contested. As such, the Parish Council will bear the full cost of this by-election.

The Clerk advised that, following on from correspondence received from Members, the decision was also taken that the Parish Council should fund the production and distribution of polling cards for the by-election.

6. REPORT ON THE DRAFT BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

Members considered the priorities of all of the Parish Council's Committees for the forthcoming year and each Committee's respective budget requests for financial year 2024/25.

Members agreed the following draft budget for 2024/25. In doing so, Members noted that the receipt of the LCTRS grant for 2024/25 would be for the forthcoming financial year only and would not be paid on a standing basis each year.

The Chair also invited each Committee to carry out a further review of its priorities and budget requests following this meeting and ahead of the Finance Committee meeting in January.

Councillor E Scott asked if the Finance Committee could present a number of budget options to Full Council in January, where the Parish Council must agree its budget and precept request for 2024/25. This approach was unanimously **agreed** by Members.

(**Please note:** that the areas highlighted in green reached broad agreement, the areas in purple were questionable and the areas in red were proposed to be removed)

The agreed draft working budget is set out below:

Planning and Licensing Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Representing the parish on planning and licensing matters	
Professional support in responding to planning applications and licensing hearings	£5,000.00
Review of County Durham Plan policies	£3,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Improving the licensed economy	
Enhanced drug searching scheme with Durham Police	£600.00
Introducing the Purple Flag scheme to Durham City	£5,200.00
PRIORITY 3: Review of the Licensing Framework Policy	
Professional support for licensing policy review	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Additional policing and safety for the parish area	
Enhanced SLA with Durham Police for late night policing	£40,000.00
Safety of Women at Night Hub	£8,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement	
Building on the Shhh...11pm to 7am campaign	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	
Planting budget	£10,000.00
A project to promote clean air across the City	£2,500.00
PRIORITY 4: Engaging the youth in the work of the Parish Council	
Project working with young people (OASES / Elvet and Bailey)	£2,500.00

PRIORITY 5: Improving the appearance of our City	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£10,000.00
Christmas frontages awards	£1,500.00
PRIORITY 6: Recycling	
Terracycle scheme	£3,000.00
Green business award	£1,000.00
PRIORITY 7: Enhancing the River Wear	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 8: Emergency planning	
Supporting our community in preparing for emergency events	£4,200.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Supporting Independent businesses	
Professional support for independent businesses in Durham	£10,800.00
PRIORITY 2: Increasing footfall through events	
Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary, miscellaneous).	£25,000.00*
PRIORITY 3: Filling empty units with new retailers	
Welcome to Durham Fund (match funded through UKSPF)	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Improving access to public toilets	
Production of a map and extra signage on available public toilets	£1,500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Full Council

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Administration of Parish Council	
(Office rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website, other expenditure)	£17,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Training of staff and Councillors	
Training budget	£3,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Upgrading the Parish Council website	
Website upgrade	£8,000.00
PRIORITY 3: supporting local community and voluntary organisations	
Grants budget	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Staffing costs	
Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)	£75,000.00
Part-time administrator for the Parish Council	£15,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

General reserves	£45,000.00
Contingencies	£15,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£60,000.00

Committee	Cost (£)
Planning and Licensing Committee	

Environment Committee	
Business Committee	
Full Council	
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024/25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(25th January 2024)**

ITEM 8: REPORT ON THE UPGRADING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

As Members are aware, there is a desire to upgrade the existing Parish Council website and a budget allocation to deliver this has been included in the Council's draft budget for 2024/25.

At present, the Parish Council has a service level agreement (SLA) with the County Council to provide our website, along with a maintenance and support agreement. Our current website and existing SLA with DCC have been in place since 2018.

The Parish Council's website is a key tool for publishing important (statutory) documents and making residents aware of the work of the Council as well as news and events happening in the parish area.

As part of its recent public consultation exercise, members of the public identified the Council's website as the best way for residents to stay informed of the Council's work.

A number of schools and other Parish/Town Councils have a similar arrangement with the County Council to provide this service. However, in September 2023, DCC's Head of Digital Services advised partners that this agreement would end in April 2024, following a comprehensive review of the Council's website support SLA, we will no longer provide the service to schools and town/parish councils from 1 April 2024.

The Parish Council has established a website working group including the Clerk and Councillors Ashfield and Walker.

In reviewing the design specification for the new website, the working group particularly highlighted the websites of Prince Bishops, Durham BID and Stanley Town Council as particularly attractive and user-friendly.

There are several things that the working group has considered, including functionality and maintenance and support requirements. These are detailed below:

Compliance

- Compliance against relevant standards and legislation such as WCAG 2.1AA, GDPR including cookie compliance, SSL authentication, National Cyber Security, Accessibility.

Functionality

- The website design is responsive
- Browser compatibility
- Intuitive navigation menus
- Contact forms.
- Search functionality
- User registration
- Consider integration with external systems such as payment gateways and social media platforms

- Adequate storage for your content and documents. We can confirm the current size of your content.
- Website performance / fast loading times.
- Search engine optimisation (meta tags, keyword usage, structured data)
- Analytics and Reporting Data

Support Arrangements

- Maintenance and update arrangements
- System availability, Disaster recovery such as backups, Return to Operation and Recovery Time Objectives
- Support Services Levels including support with creating and uploading content.
- Design and structure changes, management of content and support arrangements
- Onboarding and Training

Contractual arrangements

- Length of contract
- Termination/cancellation clauses
- Copyright arrangements

A number of quotations have been sought from different suppliers recommended by DCC's Digital Services team for the following service:

- Full website design service
- Admin CMS system built for easy editing
- Extraction of all events on the current site for re-upload to the new design
- Responsive to work on mobile / tablet devices
- SEO optimised
- Testing before launch
- Hosting included for 1 year
- SSL certificate included for 1 year

The Parish Council will also continue to own the URL for the site, in order that the ongoing hosting costs for the site can be set within a defined budget included in the administration of the council fund.

Costs have been received as follows:

Company A - £1,650 (+VAT)

Company B - £7,400 (+VAT)

Company C - £8,200 (+VAT)

In the case of Company A, the Parish Council has previously worked with this company on other graphic design projects, e.g. the production of the "What to do if you have a local issue in Durham..." leaflet, etc.

In addition to the costs set out above, it is also recommended that the Parish Council acquires a dozen or so photos to populate the webpage from a local photographer and an additional element to the budget for this work is included in

the current draft budget, should Members approve the appointment of Company A.

Once the chosen company is selected, it is proposed that the Council's working group be delegated overall design responsibility for the new website.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) For Members to agree to the upgrading of the Parish Council's website, as set out in the above report.2) If 1) is approved, for Members to select an appropriate supplier from the list provided to upgrade the website.3) If 1) and 2) are approved, for Members to agree to delegate overall design responsibility for the new website to the Parish Council's working group.
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ITEM 9: TO REVIEW THE PARISH COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Following on from the Durham South parish ward by-election, there is a need for the Parish Council to consider the membership of its own committees as well as Councillors who represent the Parish Council on various outside organisations.

At present, the Parish Council has five Committees as well as Full Council. Each of these Committees carries out a specific function of the Parish Council, as set out in the Committee Terms of Reference. In some cases, a Committee has delegated authority to act on behalf of Full Council (for example the Planning and Licensing Committee responds on behalf of Full Council to planning applications) but decisions on expenditure where appropriate and of a strategic nature are taken at Full Council.

The below grid provides an overview of the current membership of each of the Committees.

In all cases, the quorum (the minimum number of Members in attendance necessary to conduct the business of the Committee) for the Parish Council's Committees is three or one third of the total Committee membership (whichever is the greater) but not less than three.

In all cases, the maximum number of Members per Committee is set out within the Terms of Reference for each Committee and is included in the grid below:

Planning and Licensing Committee (7 Members) Grenville Holland (Chair) Susan Walker (Vice-Chair) Richard Ormerod Carole Lattin Alan Doig Esther Ashby Nicola Brown	Environment Committee (6 Members) Carole Lattin (Chair) Victoria Ashfield (Vice-Chair) David Freeman Liz Brown Susan Walker Rupert Friederichsen
Personnel Committee (5 Members) Alan Doig (Chair) Elizabeth Scott (Vice-Chair) (Previously) Govind Nair Victoria Ashfield Grenville Holland	Business Committee (6 Members) Richard Ormerod (Chair) David Freeman (Vice-Chair) Nicola Brown Grenville Holland Esther Ashby Victoria Ashfield
Finance Committee (6 Members) Alan Doig (Chair) David Freeman (Vice-Chair) Robert Hanson Victoria Ashfield Helen Weston Liz Brown	

The Parish Council has also agreed to have a representative on outside local organisations, where the aims of these are aligned with the strategic objectives of the Parish Council in the exercise of its functions.

The below table shows the current Parish Council representatives on outside local organisations.

Members are reminded that, as per the terms of reference of the CDALC Larger Councils Forum, the City of Durham Parish Council may have up to a maximum of three representatives, which may include either three Parish Councillors or two Parish Councillors and the Clerk.

Members are reminded that, as per the terms of reference of the City Safety Group, this group is an officer only group and therefore the representative of the Parish Council on this group must be the Clerk.

Members are also reminded that there is a need for all Parish Council representatives to provide a report to Full Council on the work of these organisations/ bodies.

Local organisation/ body	City of Durham Parish Council representative
Community Engagement Task Force	Victoria Ashfield
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Economic	Esther Ashby
Community Engagement Task Force sub group – Citizenship	Victoria Ashfield
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Lived Environment	Carole Lattin
PBSA Liaison Group	Esther Ashby
Durham Access Group	Nicola Brown and Susan Walker
CDALC Larger Councils Forum	Esther Ashby, Adam Shanley and Richard Ormerod
City Safety Group	Adam Shanley
Durham BID board	Adam Shanley
Durham AAP Board	Susan Walker
Durham University Housing Group	John Ashby

The membership of both the Parish Council’s Committees and Councillors who represent the Parish Council on various outside organisations will be reviewed again in May 2024 at the annual meeting of the Council.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree the membership of its own committees as well as Councillors who represent the Parish Council on various outside organisations.
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ITEM 10: PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGY 2024/25

The aim of the Parish Council's strategy is to give local residents, Councillors and Officers a clear understanding of what the council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver its aims and objectives. The strategy sets out what the areas of development or change the Council intends to focus on over the next year outlining those areas of service that are identified as priority aims and objectives.

As part of this, all Parish Council Committees were asked to agree their priorities for the forthcoming financial year so that this can feed into the Parish Council's budget agreement.

The purpose of this report is to set out the aims and objectives of each Committee of the Parish Council under these five key priorities. Councillors will also be considering budget proposals as part of the report into the Parish Council's budget for 2024/25.

The Finance Committee and Personnel Committee are not included in this as they are Committees which support the day-to-day management of the Parish Council as opposed to delivering projects for the community.

Members have agreed that the five overarching priorities for the Parish Council are:

1. Being an ambitious voice for the city
2. Enhancing the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish
3. Upholding the Neighbourhood Plan and representing the parish on planning matters
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.

Looking Forwards

The 'Looking Forwards' document has also been included as part of this work. 'Looking Forwards' is a companion document to the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan and has been developed by the City of Durham Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Party. It is built on the aspirations and views as expressed by local people for their City during the five years of preparation of the Plan. It looks forward to greater involvement of the community in making Durham a more creative and sustainable City.

Committee priorities

The priorities for each Committee in 2024/25 are set out below:

Planning and Licensing Committee

Council priorities 2024/25	Planning priorities 2024/25	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
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1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Representing the Parish as a consultee on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Consulting the Parish on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Ensuring schemes deliver the required levels of affordable housing and adapted housing for the disabled and elderly.	Theme 4. A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Promoting the creation and adoption of new Public Rights of Way and ensuring that they are accessible to all.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
	Protecting our green infrastructure and assets within our parish boundary and ensuring that they are used to the best possible public benefit.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the	Upholding the development plans for the area i.e.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

parish on planning matters.	Neighbourhood Plan and County Durham Plan.	<p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live</p>
	To maintain and develop an evidence-base to update the Neighbourhood Plan and comment on planning applications.	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live</p>
	Protecting our World Heritage Site, Conservation Areas and designated and non-designated heritage assets.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Delivering a Conservation Area Management Plan	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Protecting against overdevelopment	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live</p>

4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Supporting accommodation above retail units in the City centre.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Supporting tourist attractions and transport infrastructure for the visitor economy	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Putting green future at the heart of planning considerations	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Resisting schemes which do not deliver net zero by 2030 and supporting those which do.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

Council priorities 2023/24	Licensing priorities 2023/24	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Representing the Parish on licensing matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Ensuring that all new licensing applications and existing premises promote the four licensing objectives.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Empowering our residents to make informed representations on licensing matters.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City

		Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	Supporting a cumulative impact policy for the parish Supporting a late night-levy on licensed premises in the parish.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	Making licensing as open as possible through hosting an online licensing map	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Making the City more accessible to all by representing the needs of all users in relation to pavement and outdoor seating applications.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Ensuring that the objectives of licensing and planning are aligned.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Promoting the early evening economy to families and tourists	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	To encourage all new taxi licenses granted by DCC to be for low emissions/ electrical vehicles only.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future
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Environment Committee

Council priorities 2024/25	Environment priorities 2024/25	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Engaging with and responding to residents of all ages and backgrounds in environment-related work Mobilise Volunteer groups Work with young people and respond to their concerns	Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life.
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Promote cleaner air, a cleaner river, green spaces, and streets for living across the city. Reduction in light pollution. Reduction in night time noise. Sustainable travel	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Work with all relevant committees to ensure the climate and ecological emergencies are considered in all planning matters. Sustainable housing	Theme 4: A City with attractive and affordable places to live
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Improve and protect the appearance of the city and its heritage.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Be proactive and collaborate with all partners (including Parish Council committees, Durham County Council, residents, developers, landlords, and other businesses) to coordinate our impact on the climate and ecological emergencies and increase community resilience. Encourage sustainable Travel Increased awareness and action on climate change.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

	Tackle the ecological emergency	
	To work with partners to establish a Community Emergency Plan for the parish area	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

Business Committee

Council priorities 2024/25	Business priorities 2024/25	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Engaging with local businesses	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Promoting responsible businesses	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Supporting new businesses in empty units across the city	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Marketing Durham as a place to visit	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy Theme 5: A City with a modern and sustainable transport infrastructure
	Contracting professional support for local businesses in the city	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

	Promoting businesses in the city centre and encouraging a variety of businesses to ensure wide range of choice for visitors	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Reducing food miles by encouraging the use of local suppliers	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life

DECISION REQUIRED	Members are asked to approve the Parish Council Strategy for 2024-25 as set out above.
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ITEM 11: PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

As Members are aware, there is a need for the Parish Council to have agreed its budget and to submit its precept request for the forthcoming financial year by the end of January 2024.

In order to support this work, all of the Parish Council's Committees met last year and have submitted budget proposals for their work from April 2024. As with previous years, the Parish Council's Finance Committee met in January and approved the below report for Full Council to consider for the Financial Year 2024/25.

Staffing costs

Members have previously expressed a desire that the staffing costs associated with the Clerk's time be (approximately) earmarked based on the functions of the Council.

These are set out below (please note that this is subject to variation depending on competing priorities):

Planning and Licensing Committee: 40%
Environment Committee: 20%
Business Committee: 15%
Finance Committee: 5%
Personnel Committee (including training): 5%
Casework, stakeholder engagement and meetings: 15%

As agreed at the Special meeting of the Parish Council in December, this report sets out 3 options for the budget below:

Planning and Licensing Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Representing the parish on planning and licensing matters	
Professional support in responding to planning applications and licensing hearings	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Improving the licensed economy	
Enhanced drug searching scheme with Durham Police	£600.00
PRIORITY 3: Review of the Licensing Framework Policy	
Professional support for licensing policy review	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
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PRIORITY 1: Additional policing and safety for the parish area	
Enhanced SLA with Durham Police for late night policing	£30,000.00 – (£15,000 carried forward from 2023/24)
Safety of Women at Night Hub	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement	
Building on the Shhh...11pm to 7am campaign	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	
Planting budget	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Engaging the youth in the work of the Parish Council	
Project working with young people to promote awareness of clean air (OASES project)	£2,500.00
PRIORITY 5: Improving the appearance of our City	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£10,000.00
Christmas frontages awards	£1,500.00
PRIORITY 6: Recycling	
Terracycle scheme	£3,000.00
Green business award	£1,000.00
PRIORITY 7: Enhancing the River Wear	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 8: Emergency planning	
Supporting our community in preparing for emergency events	£2,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Supporting Independent businesses	
Professional support for independent businesses in Durham	£10,800.00
PRIORITY 2: Increasing footfall through events	
Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary).	£25,000.00 £30,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Filling empty units with new retailers	
Welcome to Durham Fund (match funded through UKSPF)	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Improving public toilets	
Improving public toilets, for example, the toilets at Owengate	£10,000.00 £1,500.00 (leaflets)
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Full Council

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Administration of Parish Council	

(Office rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website and other expenditure)	£17,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Training of staff and Councillors	
Training budget	£3,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Upgrading the Parish Council website	
Website upgrade	£8,000.00 £3,000.00
PRIORITY 4: supporting local community and voluntary organisations	
Grants budget	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 5: Staffing costs	
Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)	£75,000.00
Part-time administrative support for the Parish Council's functions	£15,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

General reserves	£45,000.00
Contingencies	£15,000.00
Election reserve	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Committee	Cost (£)
Planning and Licensing Committee	
Environment Committee	
Business Committee	
Full Council	
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024/25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Key on project budgets

Definite
Maybe
Cancelled/changed

- End of year position for 2023/24 = £45,000.00 (reserves).
- Precept (if frozen) + LCTRS grant = £241,938.12

Option 1 (projects in green only)

- Total funds required = £256,600.00
- Total increase required = £14,661.88
- % increase in precept (from £52.17 Band D) = 5.88%
- New Band D charge = £57.66

Option 2 (projects in green and yellow)

- Total funds required = £287,400.00
- Total increase required = £45,461.88
- % increase in precept (from £52.17 Band D) = 17.18%
- New Band D charge = £64.58

Option 3 (freeze the precept)

- Members will be required to remove projects listed above in order to achieve a total working budget (including contingencies) of £241,938.12.

**DECISION
REQUIRED**

Members are asked to agree their preferred budget option for financial year 2024/25 from the report set out above.

ITEM 12: PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT REQUEST FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

Budget

Please refer to Item 11 for consideration of budget priorities for 2024/2025.

Information on Council Tax base

Council Tax base is calculated by taking the number of houses in the City of Durham Parish Council area, allocating a weight to them based on their council tax banding and adding up the total of the weighted households. For example, higher council tax band properties carry a higher weighting and lower council tax base properties carry a lower council tax weighting. The Council Tax Base can therefore fluctuate from year to year based on the number of properties in each area. For example, council tax base will increase if any new houses have been built and the occupants have started to pay council tax but may decrease if for example any houses have been demolished in an area or have changed their use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C4 or sui generis (non-tax paying Use Classes).

The 2023/24 Tax Base is 4,641.5. The 2024/25 City of Durham Parish Council Tax Base has been calculated at 4450.1. Our Tax Base has therefore decreased by 191.4 which equates to a reduction of £9,985.34.

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant

The LCTRS grant payable to the City of Durham for 2023/24 is £8,437.00.

The reduced tax base and the LCTRS Grant produces a net position of -£1,548.34 for 2024/25.

Precept request

The precept request must be submitted to Durham County Council by the end of January 2024.

The Parish Council's precept Band D charge is currently £52.17. Although the City of Durham Parish Council area has a high population, its tax income is lower than areas of similar size due to the significant number of properties exempt from Council tax because of their use as student accommodation.

The Band D charge in the City of Durham parish area remains one of the lowest in County Durham.

Parish Council consultation

Between 27th November to the 5th January, the Parish Council carried out a public consultation exercise. This consultation focused on the work of the Parish Council to date, what residents viewed as their priorities for the parish area and how the Parish Council can best communicate the work it does in the community with local residents. The consultation also sought residents' views on whether they would be willing to pay a higher precept in the financial year 2024-25 in order to fund solutions to local issues.

A total of 29 responses have been received from residents of the parish to this consultation.

A summary of the responses received to each question is below:

How would you rate the City of Durham Parish Council's performance since it was founded in 2018? Please provide details.

From the 29 responses received to this consultation:

24 rated the performance of the Parish Council since 2018 as being either excellent or very good. Positive feedback in particular was received in relation to the Council acting on behalf of residents' concerns, the Council's work in planning and the work of our two Neighbourhood Wardens Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson.

3 respondents rated the performance of the Parish Council as being either good or OK.

2 respondents rated the performance of the Parish Council as being either 'not good or poor'.

In both cases where the response on the performance of the Parish Council has been either 'good to OK' or 'not good to poor', respondents have highlighted that their main concerns appear to be beyond the powers of the Parish Council to directly act on or general statements about issues such as studentification, the perceived state of the City centre, etc. have been included.

What would you most like to see the City of Durham Parish Council prioritise over the next year?

The main issues highlighted through this consultation were as follows (in order of priority):

- Addressing the studentification of the parish area
- Creating a more varied and vibrant high street
- Making the community safer and addressing anti-social behaviour such as noise and late-night anti-social behaviour.
- Improving the cleanliness and appearance of the parish area.
- Tackling car parking issues and the lack of car parking spaces for residents.
- Working to get Baths Bridge and the Leazes Road footbridges opened properly again

What do you feel are the additional issues in the City of Durham Parish area and would you be prepared to pay a small increase in the Parish Council's precept to fund solutions?

Additional issues highlighted through this consultation were as follows:

- Improving the air quality of the City centre.
- Ensuring historical aspects of the city are kept.
- Improving conditions for city retailers
- Addressing the anti-social behaviour and the general street scene.
- More events for families in the City centre.

From the 29 responses received to this consultation:

27 said that they would be willing to pay an increase in the precept.

2 said that they would not be willing to pay an increase in the precept.

What are the best ways for the Parish Council to keep residents updated on its work in the community? (For example, public meetings, website, newsletters...)

A mixed response was received to this particular question, with most respondents highlighting that use of electrical communications such as Facebook, the website and emails are low cost and efficient ways of communicating with residents.

Others preferred more public meetings, a Parish Council newsletter and more advertising in the local press.

Other matters

A full copy of all responses can be made available to Members upon request.

At the most recent meeting of the Parish Council's Community Residents Association Forum (CRAF), Forum Members agreed that Parish Council's precept should be increased in order to accommodate the proposed work of the Parish Council.

DECISION REQUIRED	Members are asked to consider the above information and agree a precept for the Parish Council for financial year 2024/25.
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ITEM X: REPORT ON PARISH COUNCIL INTERNAL CONTROLS

1. RESPONSIBILITY

Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 requires Councils to carry out a review of their internal controls annually before the end of the financial year.

The City of Durham Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

In discharging this responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them effectively, efficiently and economically.

The Parish Council has now adopted a risk register and this is under continuing review by the Clerk and any issues arising from risk assessments carried out will be reported to full Council.

The Council

The Council has elected a Chair who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings and together with the Clerk for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful.

The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January full Council meeting each year. The January meeting of the Council also approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The full Council meets at least 10 times per year. The Parish Council does not usually meet in August or in December.

A budget report is prepared and submitted to all of the Parish Council's Finance Committee meetings showing income and expenditure together with a budget update for all Committee spends. Any budget revision reports are also reported for information and these set out any changes to the budget as per Council decisions or any known budget over or underspends.

Clerk to the Council

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is

responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations and advises the Council on managing risks. The Clerk also ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to. The Clerk also manages projects agreed by full Council and works with all suppliers and contractors agreed by full Council to carry out functions on behalf of the Council.

Payments

All payments made are reported to all Finance Committee meetings. The Parish Council now makes all payments via electronic banking. Two Members of the Council from the current list of five authorised signatories (excluding the Clerk who acts as administrator) must authorise every payment against invoices before authorising the payment using their own login details provided by the bank.

There is a facility for making urgent payments out of meeting if necessary. Such payments are also reported to the Parish Council's Finance Committee meeting and all decisions to spend funds as urgent action are ratified at the next Full Council meetings and minuted as such.

Risk Assessments/Risk Management

The Council carries out regular risk assessments in respect of actions. The Clerk makes an annual risk management report to the Council. A review of financial management risks is included as part of the review report.

Internal Audit

Last year, the Council appointed an independent Internal Auditor, Mr Gordon Fletcher, who reports to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management
- Reviews
- Insurance cover

A review of internal audit must be carried out before the end of each financial year.

Gordon Fletcher has indicated that he is willing to carry out an audit of the Parish Council again next year. The cost of this service is £150.

Gordon was previously the Audit Manager at Easington District Council before retiring when the Unitary Council was formed and set up his own business by providing an internal audit service for Town and Parish Councils. This has grown to a current portfolio of 7 local Town Councils and 24 local Parish Councils.

Gordon is C.M.I.I.A. (Chartered Member of the Institute of Internal Auditors) qualified and has his own professional indemnity insurance.

External Audit

The Council's External Auditors are Mazars, appointed by the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA). They submit an annual Certificate of Audit, which is presented to the Council, together with a copy of their report listing any issues to be raised. At the end of the Audit the Council must display the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for 14 days and must make the Annual Governance and Audit Return (AGAR) and Final Accounts available on request. These are also displayed on the Parish Council's website.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

The Council has a responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of:

- The Full Council
- The Clerk to the Council who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment and managing risks
- The independent Internal Auditor who reviews the Council's systems of internal control
- Mazars, the Council's external auditors, who make the final check using the AGAR, which is completed and signed by the Responsible Financial Officer, the Chairman and the Internal Auditor.

5. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The external audit report for 2022-23 was carried out by Mazars and was completed in September 2023. No issues were raised by the external auditors.

6. INTERNAL CONTROL ISSUES

The Auditors did not raise any issues as part of the 2022-23 Audit.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Councillors are requested to approve the report.2) Councillors are asked to agree to the appointment of Mr Gordon Fletcher as the Parish Council's internal auditor for the financial year 2023/24.
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